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- Health & Human Services Appropriations
- Local Government & Housing
- State Government & Tribal Affairs

# 2010 Final Legislative Report

30th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Spring 2010



WASHINGTON STATE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I hope my final report on the 2010 legislative session finds you and your loved ones well.

The first thing I'd like to say is "thank you" for the terrific response to my January community survey. I especially appreciated the handwritten and emailed comments many people sent. I read every single one and took your concerns, advice and constructive criticisms to heart.

Our district's survey answers were not the only reason why I opposed the Legislature's tax increases and repeal of Initiative 960. I'll mention other reasons later. But it was good to know the vast majority of local citizens agreed with me that lawmakers should balance the budget by making reforms and not by raising taxes.

I hope you'll look through this newsletter to learn more about these other issues the Legislature faced this session.

I also hope you'll remember that even though the legislative session has ended, I work for you throughout the year. Your thoughts, concerns and questions are always welcome, so please don't hesitate to contact me in the months ahead. My legislative assistant Leanne Horn and I take great pride, and pleasure, in providing quality service to 30th District constituents.

All the best,

Mark

## Why I opposed repeal of I-960

The right of initiative is the first right reserved to the people by our State Constitution. It is a right that safeguards our other rights and that must be respected. Only a grave public emergency can justify repealing a public initiative just 2½ years after it was passed.

*"The first power reserved by the people is the initiative."*

*Washington State Constitution, Article II. Section 1*

That wasn't the case this year. The Legislature repealed I-960 in order to pass a tax package that amounts to about 2.5% of the total budget. But if a 2.5% problem can justify repealing a public initiative, especially if overturning the initiative does not solve the problem, then no initiative is safe. So I opposed the repeal on principle, and would do it again.

# 2010 Final Legislative Report

## Why I opposed the tax increases



In addition to opposing the repeal of Initiative 960, I also opposed the \$757 million tax package. Some lawmakers said the public would support higher taxes to balance the budget. But I didn't guess, I asked. Only 4% of the local citizens who responded to my January survey said the deficit should be solved by higher taxes. Another 20% said it should be fixed by a combination of budget reductions and tax hikes. But fully 75% said the deficit should be fixed by budget cuts alone or by new policies that reduce the need for government spending.

As Chair of the Audit Review & Oversight Committee, I know we can make existing tax dollars go further by making government more efficient and cost-effective. In fact, I proposed several specific reforms this year to improve government ethics, efficiency, openness and accountability, but prevailed in only a few cases (see "[Standing up for reform](#)").

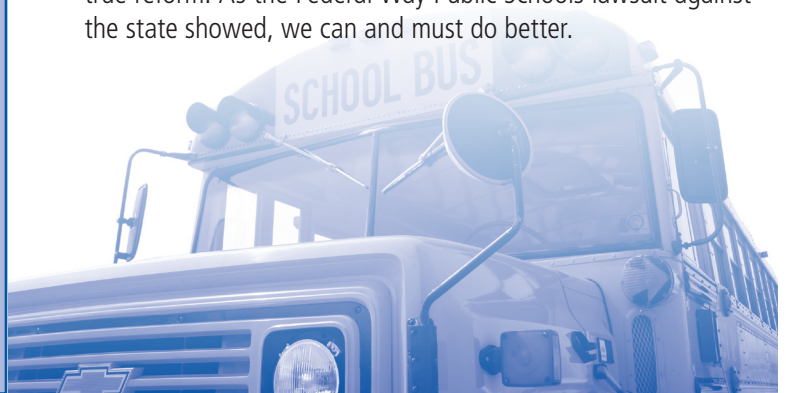
Anyone who thinks we can tax our way out of our budget problems doesn't understand the problems. I could not support more taxes when what we really needed were more reforms and a more efficient and effective government.

## Education: Mixed results on progress



I was a sponsor of last year's major education funding reform, which created a 10-year blueprint for meeting the state's duty to fully fund basic education. We started to implement the blueprint this year by requiring the state to phase in funding for smaller class sizes in grades K-3 and requiring improved support for maintenance & operations and pupil transportation. We also took positive steps this year to reduce bullying and increase respect for civil rights in schools.

However, I opposed the so-called "Race to the Top" bill because it didn't go far enough. Once again, we failed to set measurable performance goals for state education funding and programs. We must have more accountability and I will continue to push for true reform. As the Federal Way Public Schools lawsuit against the state showed, we can and must do better.



## Building homes, good projects and good jobs



I was glad we passed the Washington Works Housing Act, which directs the Housing Finance Commission to invest \$1 billion of its existing investment capacity in affordable housing. In a few years, it will get an estimated 10,000 construction workers back to work.

Another win for jobs and the environment will double — from 10 to 20 years — the payback period for energy-conservation and water-conservation loans provided by public utilities. Tearing down financial barriers to conservation projects will grow jobs and help us reach important environmental goals.

These laws are fine. But I was again disappointed that the Legislature failed to focus any attention on the slow disappearance of middle class jobs in our state and growing number of "at risk" families who need government help to survive. The current trend of declining wages and rising taxpayer costs for services to fill the wage-gaps can only lead to more government dependency for individuals, bigger government and unsustainable budgets



### Baldrige Quality Award Appointment

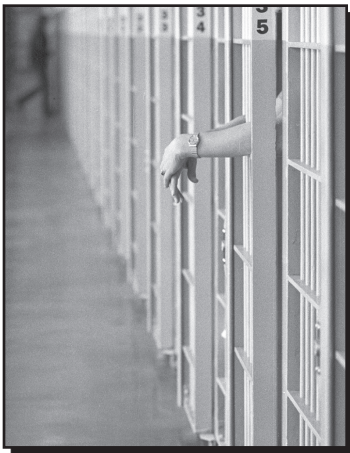


I'm happy to report I was recently appointed to the 2010 volunteer Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. This award is presented annually by the President of the United States as our nation's highest official award for performance excellence in both the public and private sectors. Examiners help organizations develop a culture of performance excellence that produces measurable improvements in results and customer satisfaction.

*"The results were so much more—the results are so much more – the results will be so much more."* John Lee, Director, Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs, on the impact of the Baldrige Award process

My past work as a volunteer examiner for the Washington State Quality Award is one reason why I was appointed chair of the Audit Review & Oversight Committee. If I sometimes seem frustrated by the failure to aim higher in pursuing government reforms, it's partly because my work as a Baldrige Examiner has shown me how much more we could achieve if we set our hearts and minds to the task.

### Limiting bail in the most dangerous cases



Our state constitution only allows judges to withhold bail for suspects in crimes that could get the death penalty. The murder of four Lakewood police officers prompted a reexamination of that policy, because the murderer was out on bail for another crime that was punishable by life in prison. When a criminal faces life in prison, there is not much

deterrence to skipping out on bail.

HJM 4220, which I supported, will ask voters if judges should have the power to withhold bail when there is a high risk of danger and the suspect is charged with a crime punishable by life in prison. The bill passed and the issue will be on the November election.

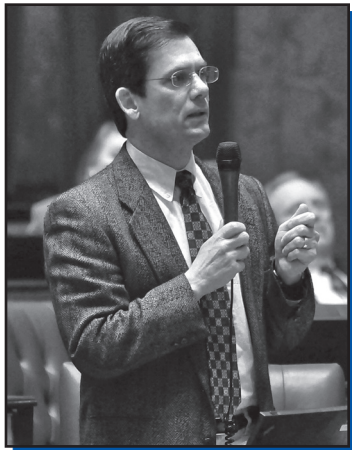
### Improving the bail process



Some counties in Washington have used a practice called "booking bail," where a book of factors guides decisions and a judge doesn't need to be involved. The practice also doesn't reflect the full weight of prior convictions. Maurice Clemmons used the bail booking procedure to get out of jail before he murdered the Lakewood

officers. A new law I supported requires a judge to approve bail for the release of a people who are being detained for felonies.

# 2010 Final Legislative Report



## Standing up for reform

Much of my work this year was spent advocating for needed reforms and opposing efforts that would undermine true reform and accountability. As the debate on the bill to repeal I-960 showed, I didn't always win. But I was successful in some key efforts.

Protecting citizen initiative rights—I strongly opposed bills that would undermine the right of citizens to propose and pass Initiatives, and I successfully blocked a number of these bills in committee—including a proposal to raise the cost of filing an initiative from \$5 to \$250.

Saving the Executive Ethics watchdog — Do you remember the public outcry when news reports warned that the House of Representatives was ready to abolish the Executive Ethics Board? This is the ethics watchdog that guards against unethical conduct in the entire executive branch of Washington. We need to restore trust in government and enforce the highest standards of conduct. Ending independent oversight over executive ethics would have been a terrible step

backwards. I'm proud I won passage of my budget amendment to save the board.

The Performance Audit Citizen Advisory Board was slated for extinction by House Bill 2617. I objected because this board provides a direct opportunity for citizens to help shape what our state should – and should not — be doing to improve performance audits of government. The House of Representatives agreed with an amendment I proposed to save this citizen's board.

Printed on recycled paper



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PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
WA STATE DEPT  
OF PRINTING 98501